

# DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 236 070

SO 015 049

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 TITLE A High Intensity Social Studies Program in a Clinical Setting for Teacher Education Students.  
 PUB DATE Nov 82  
 NOTE 17p.; Paper presented at the Annual Conference of the National Council for the Social Studies (Boston, MA, November, 1982).  
 PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)  
 EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.  
 DESCRIPTORS Comparative Education; Curriculum Enrichment; Elementary Education; \*Field Experience Programs; Foreign Countries; Higher Education; Methods Courses; Program Descriptions; Program Development; Program Improvement; \*Social Studies; \*Student Teaching; Teacher Education Curriculum; \*Teacher Education Programs; Teaching Experience  
 IDENTIFIERS Australia (Melbourne)

## ABSTRACT

A social studies elementary teacher education program at Phillips Institute of Technology in Australia is described. The program, which places students in charge of teaching a 9-week social studies unit, is recommended as an alternative to the conventional lecture method. The paper is divided into discussion of five aspects of the course: objectives, implementation, student requirements, problems, and evaluation. The course's primary objectives are to create a supportive learning experience and to help students learn by doing, develop discussion skills, and analyze personal performance. Prerequisites for program implementation are outlined, including selecting a suitable curriculum unit and finding an agreeable elementary school placement. The major components of the student assignment are to plan and teach a 1-hour lesson per week, to participate in weekly discussion groups, and to keep a journal. Rationale underlying each of these requirements is explained. Major pitfalls, centering around student inexperience, include inadequate basic skills, tension, and lack of a model. The overall success of the program is assessed on the basis of student and faculty feedback. A 14-item bibliography is included. (LP)

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A HIGH INTENSITY SOCIAL STUDIES  
PROGRAM IN A CLINICAL SETTING  
FOR TEACHER EDUCATION STUDENTS

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Paper presented at the annual  
Conference of the National Council for  
the Social Studies, Boston, November 1982

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This paper is a description of a 4 semester-hour social studies education unit within an elementary teacher education program at Phillip Institute of Technology which attempted to integrate social studies theory and practice. In previous years the unit had been conducted through a workshop approach where the instructors modelled the required teacher behaviours and the students performed the activities which children in the classroom would be expected to undertake. The workshop was supported by extensive reading and discussion.

The need for a different approach to social studies education came about through course review by students and staff. At the end of the unit in 1981 there were several students who provoked general agreement within the group when they expressed some unease or apprehension about the prospect of putting into practice the measures which had been covered in great detail in class. The disclosure came as quite a surprise as these students were articulate and well-informed and, on the basis of assigned work, would have been judged as being well versed in social studies education.

Our response was to change the focus of the course. We decided to take one elementary social studies program and have students become thoroughly familiar with it by teaching it and reflecting upon their experiences. We hoped that by involving the students directly in the roles to be learned we would produce ". . the desired teaching behaviour more effectively than remote or abstract experiences such as lectures on instructional theory {could do} " (Peck and Tucker, 1973, p.943). Student feedback had made it clear to us that:

Theoretical discussions on classroom planning and teaching-learning techniques are rarely seized upon by students as being remotely relevant unless they have the opportunity to verify them in the classroom situation. For them, the classroom is the testing laboratory. All curriculum study activities from instructional models to specific questioning strategies are anathema to them unless there is the opportunity to experiment and practise in real schools with real children. (March, 1975, p.69).

In brief, the project was concerned with four key hopes. The first was that students would learn to teach a unit of social studies by actually doing it, not by listening or reading about it or examining isolated parts of the program, out of context, in a college classroom. The second was that as the kinds of teaching skills to be learned and practised are those which are commonly part of the new social studies - skills of questioning, challenging, and leading group discussions with a group of pupils within a classroom setting - students would be able to use any social studies program which was running in the schools to which they were appointed after graduation, that is, it was hoped that a transfer of skills would occur. Third was the hope that students would develop a reflective capacity or the skills of self-analysis (Dunkin, 1976, p.158) so that they would be better able to view and comment upon their own teaching performances and be able to relate their practises to theory. Finally, in order to facilitate these three intentions, it was hoped that a supportive group atmosphere which enabled students to share a productive, cooperative endeavour to achieve professional competence and autonomy, could be developed for as Withall and Wood (1975, p.58) claim:

By involving professionals in activities which develop small groups of peers who trust each other, work effectively together, and develop a set of belief standards about their operations, one creates an

environment for change. The new group relationships and norms enable people to behave differently and try out new ideas. The group not only sanctions such behaviour, it provides protection and support for risking change.

Having decided the direction we would take, there were still some obstacles to be overcome. The first task was to select a social studies program. The choice was wide open as the Victorian Education Department allows teachers to adopt any published social studies program which they assess as suitable for their children and their community; or to adapt any published program to their own purposes; or finally, to devise a program of their own. We considered a number of possible programs and eventually decided to use "Society in View" (SIV) for a number of reasons. SIV is a recommended program of the Victorian Education Department and as such is taught in many schools throughout the State; it is a K-7 program unlike, for example, Man: A Course of Study, which had been considered; it is based upon the philosophies and procedures of the new social studies; and its content was Australian and therefore needed no amendments or revision.

The number of college students who enrolled for the course was important because there were only two instructors available to run the program. Finding a school which could participate also promised to provide difficulties because it was not possible to pay classroom teachers a supervision fee as is done with regular field experience; the school needed to be flexible enough to timetable social studies for a Thursday afternoon or a Friday morning because the college timetable lacked flexibility beyond those two time slots; ideally the school needed to be convenient to the college; and finally the school needed

to agree to the use of SIV by the students.

In any event the course was not swamped by eager students. Only eight volunteers enrolled. We did not realise at the time how fortunate we were to have a small group.

Difficulties gaining access to a school were also short-lived. A former colleague who had lectured at the college in social studies education and who had returned to teach in a nearby school, expressed interest in the program. Acting as an intermediary he gained an enthusiastic response from the principal of the school and the teachers in his year six unit who went to great lengths to accommodate our students, the SIV program and our timetabling needs.

The State Education Department requires teachers who intend to teach SIV to undertake an accreditation workshop before they are able to receive the program materials and teach the course. Students who chose to become involved in this pilot study attended an intensive residential workshop at a seaside resort in the week before they were to begin teaching a unit from SIV. The workshop, as well as providing accreditation, also revised and reinforced the main teachings of first and second year social studies education courses, and most importantly, laid foundations for the development of trust and friendship between students and college staff. The project was now ready to begin.

There were three main aspects of each week's work for the students in the program. They had, first, to plan and teach a group of eight or nine

pupils for one hour each week. This was to continue over nine weeks so each lesson had to be planned and conducted in a logical sequence. To remove the artificial nature of practice teaching, the students were totally responsible for the social studies program of the classes they were working in over the nine-week period. The choice of unit was their own - a choice bound only by the demands of the school's program in the same way that the teachers' selection would have been constrained. Lessons were not discrete and isolated but parts of a sequential development of the unit. This situation was not previously organized for them but rather depended upon their own perceptions of what should happen and in what order. The day-to-day decisions rested in their own hands.

The students were told from the beginning that the skills they displayed (or failed to display) would have no bearing upon their assessment. We saw this as an important aspect of the project because it is known that learning from the regular field experience programs in teacher education courses can be hindered by tensions created by the judgemental nature of supervision and that the grading system distorts the perspective of practice. Certainly, "undifferentiated and global concepts of teaching effectiveness" are seen as unhelpful as "a basis for investigating the effects of ... preservice ... activities" (Hughes and Traill, 1975, p.115). Consequently, we felt that if the assessment for this part of the project were removed the tensions could be at least reduced, if not eliminated.

The second aspect of the work was that there was a lengthy and

detailed group conference which followed immediately after the teaching session. This conferencing session attempted to develop in the students:

... a conviction and a value: that teaching, as an intellectual and social act, is subject to intellectual analysis {involving} objectivity in perception and criticism of the teaching performance {as well as} systematic, disciplined, and practical thinking about the wide range of factors which affect the process of formal instruction and its outcomes (Cohn, 1981, p.26).

It was also meant as a vehicle to enable teaching practice to grow from and be enlightened by theory, and to relate this practice to other college coursework. Students in the group discussions were meant to be gently and realistically critical of their own performances, helpful with the problems of others, and supportive of other members of the group.

The staff saw their roles in the same light. Several writers have noted critically that "we typically do not practice what we teach in teacher education" (Bush, 1977, p.8) - that we present inconsistencies between what we say is the essence of good teaching and the way in which we teach; that we demonstrate a lack of faith in and commitment to our own product because we do not employ it ourselves - even though sufficient studies have shown that "when teachers are treated in the same way they are supposed to treat their pupils, they are more likely to adopt the desired style of teaching behaviour" (Peck and Tucker, 1973, p.943).

To avoid the spectre of such inconsistency instructors tried to provide an atmosphere of support, of caring, of cooperative endeavour. As well, we tried to maintain a consistency between the way teachers are advised to proceed when teaching social studies to children and the way

we taught.

Part of the thrust of the new social studies is the emphasis upon children creating their own knowledge from a wide range of activities and experiences and a large degree of reflection upon and debate about the meanings which can be derived from them. Allied to this is the notion that in the process children can learn and refine skills (thinking, academic, research, and social skills) which lead them to intellectual autonomy for their lives beyond the classroom. The teacher, in order to bring this about, is expected to be an organizer of experiences, a questioner, a challenger, a provocateur, rather than a dispenser of knowledge.

This role, which we attempted to assume, is much more subtle and demanding (and, it should be added, potentially stressful). Issues were raised, students were asked to comment on specific problems which were posed, or to provide evidence for a point of view, or a rationale for particular ideas. The idea was to suspend judgment on the work of individual students in order to encourage the students themselves to make the judgment; to delay providing answers to problems so that the group could think through solutions; to debate between the two of us and in front of the students so that they would be encouraged to participate in a similar manner and to show them that there is rarely a "right" answer but that through a clash (or a connection) of ideas, different and equally suitable answers could emerge.

The third aspect, and this was really the major task in terms of

assessment, was that the students were expected to keep a journal in which they wrote weekly letters to the two instructors. In the letter they were expected to describe briefly the progress made in their teaching group, and to show how what they had done fitted with the purposes of the unit of work and the curriculum from which the unit was derived. They were also expected to relate their work in social studies to work the children had done in other subject areas or they themselves had covered in other college courses.

There was a place in the letter for critical comments (positive and/or negative) on their own teaching performances including the adequacy of their planning and preparation; comments and observations on the children's performances, the facilities available to them, and to the value they (the students) saw in this experiential program. The letter was meant to conclude with a brief statement of what was to be done in the classroom in the following session.

It was felt that this letter form would allow a student to muse, to wonder, to pose questions, to make sense of their teaching and to give further thought to the conferencing session. Staff wrote replies each week to each of the students in an attempt to establish dialogue with individuals, to respond to questions posed (usually with further questions), to raise questions of the student, and to recommend readings which were relevant to the concerns of each individual.

The program did not start well. Evidently the students felt uneasy about the newness of the situation. Unfamiliar school, children, class

teachers, "new" program, teaching in sight of their peers in a large, open-space room and an awareness that they were visible to five adults (three classroom teachers and two college staff) may have all been contributing factors. Admittedly, the students were under a great deal more pressure than they would have had to endure on normal field experience. In the words of one of the group members, "I was thrust into a situation where I had to make decisions which I could justify". A second student commented that she came to enjoy the sessions towards the end even though she "did not think {that she would} in the beginning", while yet another was more direct: "I'll be blunt and say I hated those first few weeks...".

Even when allowance is made for these pressures and tensions, however, a lack of confidence and inadequacies with basic skills were evident. Assumptions that had been made about the level of the students' classroom management skills proved to be inaccurate and initially, they were slow to respond during conferencing in a frank and open manner.

The slow start to conferencing was understandable as the students needed time to establish firm bonds with each other. It is also possible that regular field experience made it difficult for them to appreciate the roles their instructors were attempting to assume. Indeed, it is highly likely that they were resisting what they saw as a role reversal for them where they were expected to appraise their own performances. Many students on regular field experience do not view the time as one for learning. If they do, they expect to learn from the classroom teacher. The college supervisor is expected to view and comment upon a "performance"

of developed skills rather than participate in the development of them. The supervision aspect was probably also important. Withall and Wood (1970, p.55) writing of supervision of school experience claim that:

Supervision is a "dirty" word to most educators who have experienced it. It connotes a situation that is unpleasant, possesses psychological threat, and typically culminates in unrewarding consequences ... supervision conjures up feelings of being misjudged, and being unfairly rated .... Most supervised persons ... resist the experience. It generally arouses in them a sense of threat which, in turn, produces anxiety and fear.

Thus students were accustomed to having judgments about their teaching skills made by someone else; they were used to attempting to put themselves in the most favourable light; and they needed to be convinced that their instructors were not, contrary to the assurances given, grading their work in the classroom.

It soon became clear that the students needed experience in self-observation, self-evaluation, and self-reflection. In the initial conferencing sessions many of the students' assessments of their own performances were incomplete and inaccurate, some grossly so.

In order to assist with development in this area college staff urged the students to record their teaching sessions on videotape. Schedules from Good and Brophy (1978) were employed to assist with the analyses primarily because of the ease with which they could be used and because they focused upon aspects of the teaching process with which students appeared to be most troubled. Assurances were given that the tapes were the student's property and that they would be employed only for individual

instruction between lecturer and student. Initially some students felt "personally threatened by the ... situation and its potential revelations" (Hughes and Traill, 1975) whilst others feared that the tapes might be used for group viewing. Perseverance, however, on two fronts, letter writing and individualised tape analysis sessions, did develop trust and appeared to be successful.

All in all, the research evidence looks quite consistent in confirming the utility of giving teachers objective feedback about aspects of their teaching behaviour. Furthermore the available evidence all indicates that teachers use such feedback to make instinctive changes in their teaching style only if another person participates in the feedback session. Apparently, simply looking at one's own performance does not lead to much new insight into what one is doing, or else does not provide adequate motivation to alter that pattern. The presence of another human being adds a potent factor which does induce positive change (when that influence is beneficially exercised) (Peck and Tucker, 1973, p.947).

As evidence of the growth in trust and group solidarity (and the growth in classroom competence) students gradually began to share their videotapes with each other. One even volunteered, towards the end of the program, to share her videotape with the whole group.

The introduction of videotaping forced a change in the sequence of the week's work. From this time students taught their lessons then viewed their videotapes alone, using the analysis schedules to assist them. Viewing and analysis was followed by the group conference. Over the next couple of days each student re-viewed and re-analysed her tape in the company of one of the instructors and then wrote her weekly journal entry.

Apart from the diversion caused by the need to concentrate on basic classroom management skills, and the delay in the development of an open, cooperative endeavour, a major weakness was that there was no model for the students to emulate. The college instructors attempted to overcome this difficulty by joining in teaching groups and demonstrating certain sequences (questioning, challenging for example). One lecturer tape recorded a segment of her lesson and used it in the conferencing for the whole group to analyse. The same lecturer has now been videotaped teaching an entire SIV unit of work. This will be the model for future groups.

Up to this point in the paper it may seem that the emphasis has been upon the problems and difficulties encountered. There are several indicators, however, that the program was worthwhile. Subjective evaluation based on teaching performances, writing, and the willingness to share experiences and videotapes revealed an increase in self confidence and self esteem. The students unanimously agreed that they had profited from the teaching and conferencing experience. One felt that the experience had been of "immeasurable value to me as a person and as a prospective teacher". Another claimed that she had "... learned a lot, not only about social studies but also about general teaching .... I like teaching {SIV} but only through teaching it have I come to understand it .... It sure beats being lectured to or reading about it without the practice". Growth in classroom competence, in self-confidence, and in the capacity to see more clearly what they had done and how they had done it were observable.

Appreciation was expressed by everyone involved in the program. The students acknowledged the approach and content of the course as giving them the opportunity of learning in the real context. They perceived that they were being taught in the way that they themselves were being asked to teach.

Students' assessment of themselves and the course were also echoed by the staff involved (this includes the classroom teachers). The effects of the course on staff were paradoxical. On the one hand lecturers were refired and rejuvenated by the challenge and by the intensity of the involvement, while at the same time the four-hour class allocation together with the time involved with individualised instruction, viewing tapes and answering letters was both physically and emotionally demanding.

On this small scale the benefits outweigh the problems. In 1965, Becker, in calling for a change in social studies, suggested that there was a breakdown in Method (p.20). Kaltsounis acknowledged that there had been innovations in terms of new social studies curricula but was not confident about their success nor their acceptance. To him, the "final hope for spreading innovations rests with the teachers' willingness to accept them and their capability to implement them" (1968, p.699). This small program has proved to be a powerful instrument which contributes to an acceptance of new techniques and a growth in classroom competencies.

We are left with problems, however, concerning the use to which such programs can be put. Ideally, students who enroll in a methods course

should be provided with the kinds of attention and resources as students in this study received, and yet the logistics of coping with student enrolments in excess of one hundred prevent this occurring. Traill (1974, p.23) says, "the question of how to solve the logistical problems of having large student enrolments in microteaching courses is still of concern". As yet, a resolution of this has not been found.

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